

Relevant Statutes

Contribution

RCW 42.17.020(14)(a) “**Contribution** includes:...(ii) An expenditure made by a person in cooperation, consultation, or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate...or their agent...” (emphasis added)

WAC 390-05-210 defines contribution in part as “(3) *Consulting with a state, local or judicial candidate.* An expenditure made by a person in cooperation, consultation, concert or collaboration with, or at the request or suggestion of a candidate, the candidate's authorized committee or agent is a contribution to such candidate. An expenditure is presumed to be made in cooperation, consultation, concert or collaboration with, or at the request or suggestion of a candidate, the candidate's authorized committee or agent when:

(a) Any arrangement, coordination or direction by the candidate, the candidate's authorized committee or agent is given to the expending person prior to the publication, distribution, display or broadcast of political advertising or prior to an expenditure being made by that person supporting that candidate or opposing one or more of that candidate's opponents; or

(b) An expenditure is made based on information about the candidate's plans, projects or needs provided to the expending person by the candidate, the candidate's authorized committee or agent with a view toward having an expenditure made; or

(c) An expenditure is made by, through or in consultation with any person who, during the current election cycle, (i) is or has been authorized to raise or spend over \$500 per election on behalf of the candidate, or (ii) is or has been an officer of the candidate's authorized committee; or

(d) The expenditure is made by or in consultation with any person who, during the current election cycle, is or has been receiving any form of campaign-related compensation or reimbursement from the candidate, the candidate's authorized committee or agent.” (Emphasis added)

Contribution Limits

RCW 42.17.640(1) states, in part: “No person, other than a bona fide political party or a caucus political committee, may make contributions to a candidate for a state legislative office that in the aggregate exceed *five hundred dollars or to a candidate for a state office other than a state legislative office that in the aggregate exceed *one thousand dollars for each election in which the candidate is on the ballot or appears as a write-in candidate.”¹

¹ The limit has been increased and is now \$1,350 for candidates for state office.

Agent

WAC 390-05-190 **defines agent** as: “a person, whether the authority or consent is direct or indirect, express or implied, oral or written, who:

- (1) Is authorized by another to act on his or her behalf; or
- (2) Represents and acts for another with the authority or consent of the person represented; or
- (3) Acts for or in place of another by authority from him or her.” (Emphasis added)

False Endorsement

RCW 42.17.530(1) States in part: It is a violation of this chapter for a person to sponsor with actual malice:...(c) Political advertising that makes either directly or indirectly, a false claim stating or implying the support or endorsement of any person or organization when in fact the candidate does not have such support or endorsement.”

RCW 42.17.505 defines “Actual Malice”: “...to act with knowledge of falsity or with reckless disregard as to truth or falsity.”

Sponsor Identification

RCW 42.17.510 states: “(1) All written political advertising...shall include the sponsor's name and address. ... The party with which a candidate files shall be clearly identified in political advertising for partisan office.

(2) In addition to the materials required by subsection (1) of this section, all political advertising undertaken as an independent expenditure by a person or entity other than a party organization must include the following statement on the communication "NOTICE TO VOTERS (Required by law): This advertisement is not authorized or approved by any candidate. It is paid for by (name, address, city, state)." If the advertisement undertaken as an independent expenditure is undertaken by a nonindividual other than a party organization, then the following notation must also be included: "Top Five Contributors," followed by a listing of the names of the five persons or entities making the largest contributions reportable under this chapter during the twelve-month period before the date of the advertisement.”

Independent Expenditure Reporting

RCW 42.17.103 “(1) The sponsor of political advertising who, within twenty-one days of an election, publishes, mails, or otherwise presents to the public political advertising supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot proposition that qualifies as an independent expenditure with a fair market value of one thousand dollars or more shall deliver, either electronically or in written form, a special report to the commission within twenty-four hours of, or on the first working day after, the date the political advertising is first published, mailed, or otherwise presented to the public.”

Apparent Violations

RCW 42.17.360 (5) states that the Commission may, “Upon complaint or upon its own motion, investigate and report apparent violations of this chapter to the appropriate law enforcement authorities;”

RCW 42.17.395(3) states: “In lieu of holding a hearing or issuing an order under this section, the commission may refer the matter to the attorney general or other enforcement agency as provided in RCW 42.17.360.”

Outside Legal Counsel

RCW 42.17.380(2) states that: “The attorney general, through his office, shall supply such assistance as the commission may require in order to carry out its responsibilities under this chapter. The commission may employ attorneys who are neither the attorney general nor an assistant attorney general to carry out any function of the attorney general prescribed in this chapter.”

Citizen Action Letters

RCW 42.17.400 states: “(1) The attorney general and the prosecuting authorities of political subdivisions of this state may bring civil actions in the name of the state for any appropriate civil remedy, including but not limited to the special remedies provided in RCW 42.17.390.

(2) The attorney general and the prosecuting authorities of political subdivisions of this state may investigate or cause to be investigated the activities of any person who there is reason to believe is or has been acting in violation of this chapter, and may require any such person or any other person reasonably believed to have information concerning the activities of such person to appear at a time and place designated in the county in which such person resides or is found, to give such information under oath and to produce all accounts, bills, receipts, books, paper and documents which may be relevant or material to any investigation authorized under this chapter.

(3) When the attorney general or the prosecuting authority of any political subdivision of this state requires the attendance of any person to obtain such information or the production of the accounts, bills, receipts, books, papers, and documents which may be relevant or material to any investigation authorized under this chapter, he shall issue an order setting forth the time when and the place where attendance is required and shall cause the same to be delivered to or sent by registered mail to the person at least fourteen days before the date fixed for attendance. Such order shall have the same force and effect as a subpoena, shall be effective statewide, and, upon application of the attorney general or said prosecuting authority, obedience to the order may be enforced by any superior court judge in the county where the person receiving it resides or is found, in the same manner as though the order were a subpoena. The court, after hearing, for good cause, and upon application of any person aggrieved by the order, shall have the right to alter, amend, revise, suspend, or postpone all or any part of its provisions. In any case where the order is not enforced by the court according to its terms, the reasons for the court's actions shall be clearly stated in writing, and such action shall be subject to review by the appellate courts by certiorari or other appropriate proceeding.

(4) Any person who has notified the attorney general and the prosecuting attorney in the county in which the violation occurred in writing that there is reason to believe that some provision of this chapter is being or has been violated may himself bring in the name of the state any of the actions (hereinafter referred to as a citizen's action) authorized under this chapter. This citizen action may be brought only if the attorney general and the prosecuting attorney have failed to commence an action hereunder within forty-five days after such notice and such person has thereafter further notified the attorney general and prosecuting attorney that said person will commence a citizen's action within ten days upon their failure so to do, and the attorney general and the prosecuting attorney have in fact failed to bring such action within ten days of receipt of said second notice. If the person who brings the citizen's action prevails, the judgment awarded shall escheat to the state, but he shall be entitled to be reimbursed by the state of Washington for costs and attorney's fees he has incurred: PROVIDED, That in the case of a citizen's action which is dismissed and which the court also finds was brought without reasonable cause, the court may order the person commencing the action to pay all costs of trial and reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the defendant.

(5) In any action brought under this section, the court may award to the state all costs of investigation and trial, including a reasonable attorney's fee to be fixed by the court. If the violation is found to have been intentional, the amount of the judgment, which shall for this purpose include the costs, may be trebled as punitive damages. If damages or trebled damages are awarded in such an action brought against a lobbyist, the judgment may be awarded against the lobbyist, and the lobbyist's employer or employers joined as defendants, jointly, severally, or both. If the defendant prevails, he shall be awarded all costs of trial, and may be awarded a reasonable attorney's fee to be fixed by the court to be paid by the state of Washington.”